

THERE IS THE JOY

A PALM SUNDAY SKETCH

by
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AUTHOR'S NOTE

1
2 *There is the Joy* is a brief (approximately six minutes) sketch for a Palm Sunday service. It was
3 commissioned to accompany a message on Matthew 21:1-11. As with most of our plays, it
4 requires no set or props—except something on which the two characters can sit. Considering his
5 advanced years, you might also wish to give the old man a walking stick.

6
7 The director should give close attention to the direction from which Jesus' procession will enter,
8 and the path it will take in front of the characters. There is, of course, no literal procession; all
9 the audience sees are the old man and his daughter. But it is important that the two characters
10 are always looking in the same direction when referencing Jesus and the other people. Ideally,
11 Jesus will approach from either stage left or stage right, down and in front of the stage. So the
12 two characters should be looking at the same spot when He first approaches. Then, during the
13 sketch, Jesus will pass in front of the stage—perhaps the line of sight might be just over the
14 heads of the audience. In any case, the two characters must always appear to be looking at the
15 same thing—in the same place—to make the audience believe.

CHARACTERS

13 A very—very—old man
14 His middle-aged daughter

SCENE

17
18 ***The Time & Place: Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem ("Palm
19 Sunday")***

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21
22 ***House lights down.***

23 ***Stage lights up.***

24
25 ***Enter a middle-aged woman helping her father: a decrepit, old
26 man.***

27
28 **Daughter**

29 *(as they enter)*

30 But why did you do it? They were all we had!

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32 ***The old man makes no reply.***

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Daughter

Or just one. Why not give them just one. But both?

The old man makes no reply. But as they approach the spot where they will sit, he begins expectantly looking in the appropriate direction for the approach of Jesus.

Daughter

(as she helps her father sit down)

You'll be the ruin of us. Giving away our last possessions.

Man

(rebuking her)

Daughter! I would not deny what is owed.

Daughter

(confused)

Owed? What could you owe these strangers?

Man

Not them. Their master.

Daughter

(slowly realizing to whom he refers)

The Galilean? Him?

Man

(shrugging)

He had need of the colt.

Daughter

So anyone can just come along and take of ours whatever they please?

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Man

He's not just anyone.

Daughter

(seriously)

Father, some say He is a fool.

Man

(animated; in jest)

And some say He is Elijah. Some say He is John the Baptist.

(more seriously)

But He is neither.

(peering into the distance)

And look—

(getting his daughter's attention)

—look! He approaches.

Silently they watch as the procession nears.

Daughter

(studying Jesus' appearance; matter-of-factly)

So very ordinary. What could it be about Him?

Man

(shocked)

You have not heard Him?

Daughter

(with a shrug)

I have not cared to.

(pause)

Well, I see that He is at least putting our colt to good use—though He would have been better carried by its mother.

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Man

Look! He speaks.

Daughter

I hear no words. His lips do not move.

Man

No, He speaks by His actions. He declares Himself. No more parables.
No more riddles. Here is the one for whom I have longed all my life.
Here is our King. Here is our Savior.

Daughter

He doesn't look like a king.

Man

(smiling knowingly)

Had he robes of spun gold, He would not be more a king.

Daughter

(not unkindly)

This peasant? How could He be the one?

Man

Yes, we expected someone more grand. But I have lived long enough to
understand that that is not how God works.

Daughter

(looking around; with amazement)

The crowd! Look at all of them! Listen to their—their joy.

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Man

(nodding)

They greet their King.

(reciting; gently)

“Behold your King is coming to you,
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.”¹

Daughter

They cry “Hosanna.” From what will He save us? The Romans?

The old man says nothing as he watches Jesus pass by.

Daughter

From Herod.

(excitedly)

Will He take the throne of Herod?

The old man says nothing.

Daughter

(insistently)

Father, from what will He save us?

Man

(turning to her; penetratingly)

From ourselves, girl. From ourselves.

Daughter

With every year you become more inscrutable. Is it age—or do you
enjoy being troublesome?

¹ Matthew 21:5, quoting Zechariah 9:9

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Man

(smiling)

Age does have benefits.

(more soberly)

One is clarity of thought.

(referring to the passing Jesus)

There He is. We cry out "Save us!" because only He can.

Daughter

(insistently)

But from what?

Man

(collecting his thoughts)

What are a few tyrants compared to eternity? What is the burden of taxes compared to life with God?

(pause)

This time—this place— These are passing. They are but a breath.

(toward Jesus)

There. That is what is real. His life. His purpose. There—there is the joy.

(pause)

Listen to Him, girl. Listen to Him, and you will learn what Jesus will save us from.

(reciting)

"I will hear what God the Lord will say;
For He will speak peace to His people, to His godly ones;
But let them not turn back to folly.
Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him,
That glory may dwell in our land." ²

Daughter

(helping the man to his feet)

All right, Father. I'll listen to Him. I'll hear about this salvation.

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Man

(with a twinkle in his eye)

Oh, and when you do, girl, ask if we might have back our two donkeys, will you? I understand they are all we have.

Daughter

(shaking her head; muttering)

Inscrutable. Inscrutable old man.

They begin to exit, but then she pauses to watch the receding crowd.

Daughter

(watching the crowd following after Jesus; with awe)

Look at how they love Him.

Man

(looking around)

For now.

(as they exit, sadly)

For now.

They exit.

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